



MARINE DEBRIS

FACT ONE



Beach clean-ups have been conducted all over the world - the most commonly found item of trash: **cigarette butts**.

FACT TWO



Seven hundred different marine species have been reported to **ingest** or become **entangled** in plastic. (Pictured: *Entangled spider crab found on Long Island beach*)

FACT THREE



When **balloons** are released they eventually come back down into our oceans. They can harm whales, dolphins, seals, turtles and birds.

FACT FOUR



Ocean currents can trap millions of pieces of marine debris and continuously mix the debris into a whirlpool, also known as a **gyre** or more commonly known as a **garbage patch**.

For more information about Marine Debris:

NOAA Marine Debris Program
<https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/>



Overview

Marine debris is a variety of different types of human-generated trash that is found in our waters and beaches. Marine debris can come in many forms such as plastics, metal, rubber, derelict fishing gear, and even vessels. This form of pollution is one of the most widespread issues that the Earth's environment faces today.

Summary

Marine debris is both a local and global issue. These items do not belong in the environment and can cause great harm to marine life, threaten the sustainability of our oceans, as well as indirectly impact human health. Although, marine debris can be very visible on beaches or floating on the ocean's surface, much of this pollution is not! Microscopic microplastics can persist in the sand and waters indefinitely collecting over time, adding to the complexity of the issue.

Impacts

The impacts of marine debris are tremendous. This form of pollution can negatively impact marine habitats, the economy, and ocean life. Marine animals can become entangled and trapped in abandoned fishing gear and balloon strings. Animals can also mistake marine debris as food and ingest it, causing harm to the animal or leading to possible death.

How You Can Help

There are many different ways you can help and your support is more important than ever! Starting at home, remember to limit your use of single-use plastics, like plastics bags, bottles, or straws, and replace them with a reusable option. Remember to practice recycling whenever possible. Lastly, conducting beach clean-ups at your local beach can prevent marine debris from reaching the ocean and harming ocean life.

Eight million metric tons of plastic enters our oceans each year. That's equivalent to dumping one garbage truck full of plastic every minute.



Cornell Cooperative Extension | Marine Program



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